

In getting ready for the future, Towey pointed to the past. When Abraham Lincoln issued his Thanksgiving proclamation 135 years ago, he said Americans had "forgotten God."

"What he said in 1863 is absolutely true today," Towey said.

Awakening 2000 will try to change that by getting Floridians to sign pledge cards reminding them to pray each day, reach out to people in need and perform several other spiritual exercises.

The project also will sponsor a "Summit of Faith" next fall and serve as an advocate for Florida's needy and neglected, especially those who are dying.

After leaving state government, Towey formed a nonprofit commission on Aging with Dignity that launched the popular "Five Wishes" living will last year. Awakening 2000 is sponsored by the same commission.

Several state leaders have agreed to participate in the project, starting with Chiles, a Democrat and Presbyterian who will be governor until Bush, a Republican and Catholic, takes over on Jan. 5.

Towey, a Democrat like Chiles and a Catholic like Bush, experienced a spiritual renewal in 1985 when he met Mother Teresa. He said he was inspired to launch an interfaith project by the late nun, a devout Catholic who respected and cared for Hindus, Muslims and Jews.

Rabbi Solomon Schiff, director of chaplaincy at the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, said he had signed onto the project because the moral fiber of American society has been devastated.

"A total commitment by responsible people to try to . . . bring it to a level of decency is the only way really that our society will survive with a positive future," Schiff said.

The list of people who have committed to take part in Awakening 2000 includes Chief Justice Major Harding, legislative leaders, Cabinet leaders, a federal judge and Christian and Jewish leaders.

Chiles and Bush plan to sign the commitment cards in early December.

But Towey said "the fundamental driving force" of the campaign is the focus on the needy.

"At Thanksgiving we remember the poor," he said. "But they need more than just a hot meal on a Thursday."

THE TAXPAYER REFUND ACT OF 1999

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, we stand here today to celebrate good news. This country is now facing the longest peacetime expansion in its history; the economy is growing; and the federal government is predicted to be running a surplus of \$2.9 trillion over the next 10 years.

The news is not all good. We are facing some pressing problems as well. The world is seeing a shift in demographics. The impending retirement of the baby boom generation affects the workplace, retirement policy, and entitlement spending. Most notably, both the Social Security system and Medicare are in financial trouble and need substantive reform. Public debt and the interest payments that go with it are continuing to grow. These issues cannot be ignored because of a strong economy and good times.

The bill before us today represents a balanced package that takes into ac-

count the problems as well as sharing in the good times. The bill will provide fiscally responsible tax relief over the next ten years while reducing the public debt \$200 billion more than the President's budget and still save the \$1.9 trillion Social Security surplus.

We all agree that the Social Security surplus should be reserved for the Social Security system. That is not the debate. The big debate here today is how do we best handle the non-Social Security surplus in the federal budget.

Many of my colleagues have argued that this bill is too large—that \$792 billion is too much. They argue that we should save this money for Medicare and other spending. I strongly disagree. It is important that we not forget those who are responsible for the surplus—hard-working, over-paying taxpayers. After all, what is a surplus—it is excess revenues over the amount needed to fund government operations.

Taxes in this country are at their highest levels since World War II. American families have seen the percentage of their personal income that goes to pay taxes grow from 23 percent in 1990 to 26%. The average taxpayer from Utah, or any other state in America, will pay nearly \$7,000 more in taxes over the next 10 years than the federal government needs, excluding the Social Security program. This is where the surplus is coming from—individual taxpayers who are turning over their hard-earned wages to pay taxes. It is only fair that we return this surplus to the rightful owners. After all, we would expect the electric or power company to rebate an overpayment, we should be able to expect the same from the federal government.

The \$2.9 trillion surplus is large enough to balance our priorities. The Taxpayer Refund Act shows that we can provide meaningful tax cuts, provide for Medicare reform, and reserve the Social Security surplus.

The Taxpayer Refund Act of 1999 provides a tax refund for everyone who pays taxes by cutting the 15% tax rate and putting more middle class taxpayers into lowest income bracket. 98 million taxpayers, 80 million with annual income under \$75,000 would get a tax cut.

In addition, 19 million two-earner families filing married returns will see their marriage penalty eliminated. It is sending the wrong signal to American taxpayers when a couple with two incomes in Utah faces a higher tax bill when they marry than they do as singles.

The bill also addresses the need for enhanced retirement security through enhanced employer plans and expanded IRAs. The demographics of the American workforce are changing and our pension laws must adapt to meet these new realities. By improving retirement systems to increase access, simplify the rules, increase portability and provide small business incentives, we help employers design and offer pension plans to meet the needs of today's employees.

Another important enhancement to our retirement security is making tax-preferred savings more widely available through expanded IRAs. This is particularly true for those without employer-provided pension and middle income taxpayers. In 1994, the median income of families owning an IRA was \$48,600—hardly wealthy by any measure. This bill would make it easier for people to increase their savings for retirement.

This tax bill helps our families struggling to finance a quality education for themselves and their children through tax-free treatment for participants in college savings or prepaid tuition plans and recipients of employer-provided educational assistance. The bill would also expand the student loan interest deduction. This is real relief that will help make education more affordable.

There are important provisions relating to school construction in this bill. The need for more resources and innovative ideas to address the issue of school construction and rehabilitation is reaching crisis proportions. My home state of Utah is expected to build 10-15 new schools a year. In the Jordan school district alone, 6 schools are currently under construction. In addition, Utah will spend \$350 million a year in new repairs. This bill would reduce the burden on small school bond issuers in complying with cumbersome arbitrage rebate rules and will allow school districts to engage in public-private partnerships. The reduction in the cost and time of school construction projects will result in more schools being built.

We have all heard about the challenge that providing adequate health care that is facing the American families. The Taxpayer Refund Act provides meaningful help for those who are struggling with the costs of insurance through tax benefits for the self-employed, employees not covered by employer plans, and consumers of long-term care insurance. There is also an additional personal exemption for caregivers.

The bill also contains provisions that would help keep the economy growth strong. There is a package of international tax relief that provides simplification and helps American companies which have operations overseas remain competitive and continue to grow.

The expiring tax credits are extended for five years and the research and experimentation tax credit is made permanent. This tax credit enhances and encourages the development of new technologies and products. This is the only way the U.S. can maintain its leadership in the high-tech world of today into the next millennium. This is very important to future economic growth. It has been said that innovation is the leading factor driving increased productivity and job creation. Innovation predominantly derives from the private sector research and development which are encouraged by the tax credit.

This bill is not perfect, however, and there are some things that I would like to change. For instance, the bill does provide some relief from the estate tax by cuts in the top estate tax rate and an exemption that rises to \$1.5 million per estate. This will provide tax relief for estates of all sizes. However, I strongly believe that we should go even further and repeal this tax altogether.

The "death tax" is unfair and inefficient. For every dollar that we collect, roughly 65 cents is spent complying and collecting this tax. This is the wrong way to use up our resources. I know that many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have labeled this a tax on the wealthy. They are wrong. The wealthy hire lawyers and advisers to create trusts and do estate planning to minimize the amount of tax they will pay. It is the small business owners and family farmers that are hit the hardest by this tax. We must find a way to remove this crushing burden from their backs.

Another important area that is not addressed in this bill is the capital gains tax rate. This too has often been labeled as a tax cut for the rich. This is not true. Million of Americans are becoming investors. They purchase stock and mutual funds directly or they invest directly through stock options, employee stock ownership plans or 401(k)s. Roughly half of American households now have some sort of stock ownership, and the number grows every year.

A recent DRI study has shown that the 1997 capital gains tax rate cuts contributed to the strong economic growth we have experienced in the last couple of years. Cutting the capital gains tax rate from 28 percent to 20 percent reduced the cost of capital, increased business investment and contributed to the increase in stock prices. We need to continue along the same path and continue to reduce the capital gains rates.

It is easy to get lost in the debate over numbers and how we should spend the surplus. But we must remember who sent us the revenue that created the surplus. We are talking about families struggling to make ends meet, provide an education for their children, or save for their retirement. They are the family running the corner grocery store or landscaping business. They are bus drivers, day care providers, carpenters and students. They work 3 hours a day on average just to pay their taxes.

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1999 is a balanced tax cut package that provides relief for middle class taxpayers. It gives American families a well-deserved tax break, simplifies the tax code, and provides pro-growth incentives to help keep the economy strong and growing. This \$792 billion bill is the biggest tax cut since the Ronald Reagan presidency. Yet, it still represents a rebate of only one quarter of the surplus dollars that the federal government has collected. We owe the American taxpayers that much.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, July 28, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,640,294,174,290.65 (Five trillion, six hundred forty billion, two hundred ninety-four million, one hundred seventy-four thousand, two hundred ninety dollars and sixty-five cents).

One year ago, July 28, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,541,906,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-one billion, nine hundred six million).

Five years ago, July 28, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,638,859,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred thirty-eight billion, eight hundred fifty-nine million).

Ten years ago, July 28, 1989, the Federal debt stood at \$2,802,619,000,000 (Two trillion, eight hundred two billion, six hundred nineteen million) which reflects a debt increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,837,675,174,290.65 (Two trillion, eight hundred thirty-seven billion, six hundred seventy-five million, one hundred seventy-four thousand, two hundred ninety dollars and sixty-five cents) during the past 10 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:57 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hanrahan, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2465) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 3:56 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Berry, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 66. To preserve the cultural resources of the Route 66 corridor and to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance.

The enrolled bill was signed subsequently by the president pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-4419. A communication from the Executive Director, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to Medicare payment policies; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4420. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the texts and background

statements of international agreements, other than treaties; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4421. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act, the report of a certification of a proposed Manufacturing License Agreement with Turkey; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4422. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles or services under a contract in the amount of \$50,000,000 or more to Singapore; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4423. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles or services under a contract in the amount of \$50,000,000 or more to Greece; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4424. A communication from the Procurement Executive, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Department of State Acquisition Regulation" (RIN1400-AA71), received July 27, 1999; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4425. A communication from the Director, Office of Regulations Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "VA Acquisition Regulation: Bonds and Insurance", received July 27, 1999; to the Committee on Veteran's Affairs.

EC-4426. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program; Clarification of the Nature of Required CDBG Expenditure Documentation" (FR-4449) (RIN2506-AC10), received July 26, 1999; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4427. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Technical Amendment to the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP)" (FR-4498-I-01) (RIN2577-AC10), received July 26, 1999; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4428. A communication from the President and Chairman, Export-Import Bank of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a transaction involving U.S. exports to South Africa; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4429. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Sudanese Sanctions Regulations; Libyan Sanctions Regulations; Iranian Transactions Regulations; Licensing of Commercial Sales of Agriculture Commodities and Products, Medicine, and Medical Equipment" (31 CFR Parts 538, 550 and 560), received July 27, 1999; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4430. A communication from the Director, Office of White House Liaison, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the resignation of the Assistant Secretary and Commissioner,